

BEWARE OF JOHN ELDREDGE AND RANSOMED HEART MINISTRIES

September 19, 2005 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

John Eldredge, co-founder of Ransomed Heart ministries and author of *The Sacred Romance* and *Wild at Heart*, is a dangerous spiritual guide. He promotes psycho-babble, spending a lot of time talking about “father wounds.” He worked with Focus on the Family for 10 years, and one of his mentors is psychologist Larry Crabb.

Eldredge teaches that Jeremiah 17:9 doesn't apply to a believer and he can therefore follow his heart:

“Too many Christians today are living back in the old covenant. They've had Jeremiah 17:9 drilled into them and they walk around believing my heart is deceitfully wicked. Not anymore it's not. Read the rest of the book. In Jeremiah 31:33, God announces the cure for all that: 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.' I will give you a new heart. That's why Paul says in Romans 2:29, 'No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit.' Sin is not the deepest thing about you. You have a new heart. Did you hear me? Your heart is good. ... The Big Lie in the church today is that you are nothing more than 'a sinner saved by grace.' You are a lot more than that. You are a new creation in Christ. The New Testament calls you a saint, a holy one, a son of God. In the core of your being you are a good man. Yes, there is a war within us, but it is a civil war. The battle is not between us and God; no, there is a traitor within who wars against the true heart fighting alongside the Spirit of God in us” (Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, pp. 133, 134, 144

It is true that God puts a new heart or nature into the believer, but it is not true that the old heart or nature is eradicated. Nowhere does the New Testament say that the believer's heart is good. Nowhere are we encouraged to follow our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed that the heart is the source of evil (Mark 7:20-23), and Paul understood that the old nature and propensity to evil is still very much present in the Christian life (Rom. 7:18). The New Testament warns that the heart can be tempted by Satan (Acts 5:3), can be evil and unbelieving (Heb. 3:12), and can be deceived (Jam. 1:26). All of those passages refer to Christians. The only way for the believer to know the right way in life is to follow the Scriptures rather than his own deceptive-prone heart. Everything must be carefully tested because there are great spiritual dangers (Acts 17:11; 2 Cor. 11:1-4; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 4:1).

Eldredge teaches that if church attendance becomes a burden, it can be dropped. “You might even need to give up going to church for a while or reading your Bible” (Eldredge, *The Journey of Desire*). He claims that a year that he stopped attending church was “one of the most refreshing years of my life.” This is open disobedience to the clear teaching of Scripture (i.e., Acts 2:41-42; 1 Timothy 3:15; Heb. 10:25).

The facilitator’s guide for small-group leaders who use Eldredge’s *Wild at Heart* videos urges them not to allow any man to dominate the group and to beware of “the doctrine cop” who is zealous about doctrinal purity. This is contrary to Acts 20:27-31; Rom. 16:17; Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:9, and many other Scriptures that require teachers to protect the flock from false doctrine.

Eldredge teaches men to listen for God’s leading apart from the Scripture. He claims that God speaks even through carnal, worldly things:

“God is intimately personal with us and he speaks in ways that are peculiar to our own quirky hearts--not just through the Bible, but through the whole creation. To Stasi he speaks through movies. To Craig he speaks through rock and roll. ... God’s word to me comes in many ways--through sunsets and friends and films and music and wilderness and books. But he’s got an especially humorous thing going with me and books. I’ll be browsing through a secondhand book shop when out of a thousand volumes one will say, ‘Pick me up’--just like Augustine in his Confessions. *Tolle legge*--take up and read” (Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, p. 200).

This is a recipe for deception and spiritual disaster. Eldredge’s wrongheaded advice leaves men defenseless against the wiles of the devil, “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Eldredge is tickling the ears of an apostate generation (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

It is the Bible alone that is the believer’s authority; the Bible alone is the voice of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Peter urges the believer to take heed unto the Scriptures as unto a light in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19). The dark place is this present world, controlled by the devil and filled with spiritual delusion and danger.

Further, the New Testament repeatedly warns against a love for this present evil world (Rom. 12:2; Titus 2:11-12; Jam. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17), but this counsel is glaringly absent from Eldredge’s teaching. He has little or no warning about such things as rock & roll, Hollywood, and sensual literature.

Eldredge’s thesis is that man needs to find his heart and then live by its dictates, but we find absolutely nothing like this in Scripture. To prove his points he quotes wildly undependable versions such as The Message and consistently misinterprets the Scripture,

taking it out of context and reading his own doctrine into it. The Lord Jesus Christ has given believing men their Commission in this present world; it is not to find their hearts but to surrender to His perfect will as it is described in the New Testament Scripture (Romans 12). Christ's Great Commission is world evangelization (Mat. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 1:8). This is what we see in the book of Acts.

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered” (Proverbs 28:26).

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